

I KNOW WHO I AM

Opening Remarks

By

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My Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Our Beloved Children

I thank the President, Polished Pillars Foundation, Mrs Chioma Emma-Nwachukwu, for asking me to formally declare open this special programme for our beloved teenagers. The privilege of sharing experiences to add value to the lives of our dear children is a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. First, this is the time to catch them young in this age of youth restiveness. We parents and teachers must guide these young ones aright especially as much of the mayhem we daily witness can be attributed to misguided and indoctrinated youth. The Bible has expressly directed us to: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Second, our children are in urgent need of positive role models, who walk the talk, and can inspire them to fulfil their manifest destiny. Third, there is always an appointed time or a critical moment in one's life, such as is provided by this Retreat, when a timely word can shape one's future for good. Fourth, this Retreat is a complement to the normal routine of schooling and everyday life. Jesus Himself admonished His disciples to "come ye apart" (Mark 6: 31) given the activities and distractions of daily life. Our teenagers should take this opportunity to retreat from the maddening crowd and engage in self-assessment and self-development under the guidance of experienced leaders.

Against the background of global and local challenges – terrorism, natural disasters, strange occurrences, increasing ungodliness, etc - those who can read the signs of the times must take urgent steps to prepare this generation of future leaders for the challenges ahead. The theme of this Retreat – **I Know Who I Am** – is open to different interpretations. From my own perspective, the following are worth noting. First, “I Know” implies either knowledge or experience. Second, there is reference to at least one personality, self, which must be shaped by and subjected to God. Third, “I Am” refers primarily to self, but, in spiritual terms, it is the attribute of God who told Moses “I am that I am.” (Exodus 3: 14) Taken together, this theme directs our hearts to the place of personal faith and experience in **self-definition**, which is perhaps more important than one’s definition by others. We are conversant with the story of how a demon asked the seven exorcist-sons of Sceva, who had pretended to be Christians : “Jesus I know and Paul I know; but who are ye?” (Acts 19: 15) It is striking that the sons of Sceva defined themselves as Christians - but neither by faith nor experience. This shows that we need more than mere profession or lip-service to define who we are. Second, what defined them was their relationship - or lack of it - with Christ. Third, we are challenged to have confidence in God and in our God-given ability to excel in life. This is captured in the Biblical declaration: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13)

On this basis, I challenge our young adults or teenagers today to define themselves by faith and experience in Christ. By the grace of God, I am what I am today in a dual sense. First, as a husband, father, son, brother, friend, colleague, neighbour, teacher, researcher, etc. in relation to my fellow human beings in a series of horizontal relationships. Second, and far more importantly, I am a Christian by faith and experience, in a vertical relationship with God, and have been so defined for almost two and half decades. The point is: know who you are in relation to the Lord and Saviour; know what talent or ability He has endowed you with; determine to excel and be **the head** rather than the tail (Deut. 28:13), and resolve to make an enduring impact on your family, school, society and the world at large. Ultimately, you should aim to make heaven at last.

With these remarks, I formally declare open this Retreat. I commit all participants to the Lord Jesus for safe keeping and pray that this experience will transform your lives for good.

God bless.